

KS2 LESSON PLAN: LANGUAGES

Juggling and learning a foreign language might seem like disparate skills, but both require perseverance and allow for mistakes – if you drop the ball, you just pick up where you left off. It's an interesting metaphor to discuss with pupils but, as this lesson plan demonstrates, the connections can go far beyond this. Using the circus as a context, language learning can be made to feel more authentic. It gives KS2 pupils the opportunity to speak spontaneously and to manipulate the vocabulary they have already mastered – two skills that should be at the heart of language lesson planning.

In this learning sequence, devised to last three lessons, communication is purposeful and not just an exercise in practising how to say your name and age – again. If pupils start in Y3 with these phrases, different ways must be found to recycle language, maintain their interest and move their learning on.

Starter activity

Play some circus music as the pupils enter the room. There's lots to choose from, but *Cirque Pinder* or *Grande Parade Du Cirque* go down well, as do more recent examples such as Blur's *The Debt Collector* and Take That's *The Circus*.

Once everyone is settled, play a clip showing a recent performance by the Cirque du Soleil (trailers are available on the official website –

Creating an act worthy of the Cirque du Soleil is a great way to balance different areas of the curriculum and practise French vocabulary in a meaningful context, says Liz Black

JUGGLING SKILLS



Today you will learn..

- > Build on prior learning of name, age, hair and eye colour
- > Learn the 'je' form of the verb 'venir'
- > Learn to say which country you come from
- > Extend dictionary skills as you search for more unusual vocabulary
- > Speak spontaneously



circquesoleil.com). A sample of the Alegria show is a good choice and only lasts for around two and half minutes. These powerful images will set the scene and intrigue the children.

At this stage, ask the children to predict what you have planned for the lesson. Then, once you've listened to their suggestions, go on to explain the sequence of learning and the rationale behind it.

The development of Cirque du Soleil should be explained carefully as this will increase

the pupils' understanding of the wider world. The company has approximately 4000 employees from 40 different countries, making it a good example of how people from all nations can work and get on well together.

Main activities

Circus in town

Divide the children into groups and tell them a French circus is on its way to town. It is looking for some new acts – can they come up with any ideas?



The children will need to think of a new circus act, choose a stage name and pick a country of origin. They should also complete a performer profile of a circus character, drawing and colouring his or her face, for use in dialogues. (The children could do this using Voki.com, a free website for avatar creation – but this must be printed out onto card as they will need the character for a speaking task later in the lesson.) Bilingual dictionaries will be needed in most cases as pupils will need to look up vocabulary for their character's name, country of origin, etc.

Once everyone has thought up an act and created a character, encourage the pupils to walk around the room and ask questions such as *Comment t'appelles-tu?* and *Quel âge as-tu?* Responses should be given in French and children should include information about their character's hair and eye colour if possible.

Pupils will need to be taught the French vocabulary necessary to speak about their act's country of origin, the language spoken in this country and the nationality of its people, e.g. *la France*, *français*, and *je viens de la France*. As homework, children should research their chosen country and bring in photos of what they might see if they were to travel through it by road – this will come in handy for the following lesson.

2 A window on the world

Begin the second lesson by asking pupils to imagine they are visiting their

circus act's country of origin. At this point the children should again practise the vocabulary covered at the end of the last session – *je viens de/du/de l'* etc

In order to travel the globe, the children's circus acts will need a trailer or caravan with some simple furniture. Hand out cardboard, material scraps, glue, paint etc so these can be created. Depending on their ability, the children should use French to describe the contents of their caravan whenever possible – *Il y a un/une/des...*

The window of the mobile home is important. Once it has been built, ask the groups to describe to the

class, in English, the view from their caravan. This often leads to some very interesting discussions about other countries. Some pupils, for example, chose Cuba and were shocked about the differences between the tourist hotels and the slums they could see behind them.

3 On with the show

Setting up a circus skills workshop using scarves, rings, juggling balls and devil sticks is tremendous fun and allows simple French to be recapped. For example, children can talk about the colours of the scarves or juggling balls. *De quelles couleurs sont tes balles? Mes balles sont... Les couleurs de mes balles sont...* They can also practise numbers by counting for how long they can juggle.

As the children practise, they can use additional vocabulary and spontaneously express opinions about their skills – *j'adore... j'aime... je n'aime pas... je déteste*. They can also comment on how difficult (or easy) they find each discipline – *je trouve ça facile / difficile*.

Having reached the end of the project, children can demonstrate their newly honed language and circus skills with a short show set to circus music.

Extending the lesson

- > **Cirque Fernando: The Equestrienne** is a famous painting by Toulouse-Lautrec that depicts ringmaster Monsieur Loyol whipping a horse. This can be used to open a discussion about the history of entertainment, in particular the past treatment of animals and disabled people. The more recent story of Anne, Britain's last circus elephant, could be used to explore children's feelings about animals in captivity (Anne was given a new home at Longleat Safari Park, having been mistreated by her previous owner). This leads to thinking about the ethical issues related to the use of animals in shows and how opinions have changed over time.
- > Pupils from a nearby secondary school, possibly accompanied by a foreign language assistant, could visit the class and pretend to be another circus act joining the troupe. This works very well if KS2 pupils are told there is an empty van on site and a new act will be joining the circus soon. Can they predict where the act might be from and what they might do? How might they welcome the new act? For example deciding what food they could prepare for them leads to good discussions about cultural differences.
- > If no language assistant is available, a parent or friend of the school community who is a native speaker of another language could participate to provide additional help and challenge with the language. This is very motivating for pupils.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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V USEFUL VOCAB

- > clown – le clown
- > juggler – le jongleur/la jongleuse
- > trapeze artist – le trapéziste
- > unicycle – le monocycle
- > unicyclist – la monocycliste
- > fire eater – un avaleur de feu/une avaleuse de feu
- > snake charmer – le charmeur de serpent/la charmeuse de serpent
- > strong man – un hercule
- > dancer – le danseur/la danseuse

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